

# Artistic Act of Kindness

Highland Park Middle School students Chandler Bjork and Avry Tucker helped kick-off summer camp activities for homeless children at the Annette G. Strauss Family Gateway Center with a colorful mural project. Each child was excited to slip on a smock and add their own touch of cheerful green, pink and purple paint to bring the design to life.

The girls planned and completed the 40 foot mural as part of their Girl Scout Troop 277 Silver Award Project. “A Silver Award project is done with a small group and requires that you plan the service project, complete it and then share the results,” Tucker said. The project began last year when concept sketches were presented, and this week the duo’s vision came to fruition. “The timing worked out perfectly. We were able to finish in one week and involve the children,” Bjork said.

The mural decorates the Center’s cafeteria and captures the uplifting mission of Family Gateway. “The silhouettes represent parents and children moving toward a hopeful future together, hand in hand,” explained Bjork. With support from the community, Family Gateway is able to keep families together and provide the housing, educational and employment programs children and parents need to make positive choices for their future.

Executive Director, Robert Alberts shared his thoughts about the project. “Isn’t it a wonderful thing that a simple act of generosity can have such life changing effects on everyone involved? Of course, we can’t directly connect painting a mural as a child to a successful adult life, but we do know that such experiences have a very positive cumulative impact,” Alberts said.

Each year hundreds of homeless children, moms and dads will enjoy the positive imagery of the mural as they enter Family Gateway to rebuild their lives work towards returning to self-sufficiency. In the future, many of these parents and children will return to Family Gateway with college degrees, successful careers and a desire to mentor new families. When returning, Avry hopes these children will remember the part they each played in creating the mural. “If they come back here in the future they’ll know what they did,” she said, “they can see what a great accomplishment this is and have a good memory of what they had here.”



Chandler, Avry and friends celebrate the completion of the new Family Gateway mural.

Enjoy a [short video](#) of the project.

Explore ways to [Get Involved](#) with children and families at Family Gateway.